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Our

(Our)

"Our Sunday Schools and Our Country."

A SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

BOARD OF MANAGERS

OF THE

GEN. PROT. EPISCOPAL S. S. UNION.

AND

CHURCH BOOK SOCIETY,

IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, NEW HAVEN, CONN., OCT. 9TH, 1860.

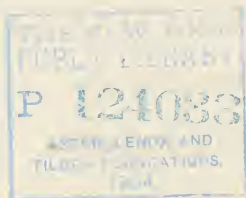
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SERMON.

“Wisdom and Knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation.”—ISAIAH, xxxiii. 6.

THE chapter containing the text forms a distinct prophecy, and refers to the destruction of the army of Sennacherib, the great Assyrian invader. Its design is to cheer the Jews, in view of this threatened invasion, with the assurance that the God to whom they should alone look for succor, would stretch forth His mighty hand for their protection, and, in the overthrow of the Assyrians, Judah and Jerusalem would be delivered, and abide in safety, and, under the reign of the prudent and pious Hezekiah, should once more claim and enjoy the peace and prerogatives of their national independence—sharing the blessings of a kingdom,

distinguished not for its dazzling conquests, nor for the luxuries of princely wealth, nor for the splendid enterprizes of an ambitious commerce, but for that UNITY, LIBERTY, and STABILITY, which are the fruits of a government that rests upon the intelligence and godliness of the people, as its sure foundation: "Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation."

What the pen of inspiration predicts in these oracular words, touching "wisdom and knowledge," in their relation to the stability of the times, and the saving strength of the people of Israel, is a general principle, and finds its application in all lands and in all times.

RELIGION and INTELLIGENCE are the two vital elements of national greatness; they are the unfailing sources of national power; the two great pillars of strength on which alone human government can securely rest. The plummet that measures the "WISDOM AND

KNOWLEDGE" of a nation, sounds the depth of the foundation of their civil and social superstructure. The wisdom of true godliness is the great conservative balance-wheel of all popular progress and national elevation.

This principle never had a fuller illustration than it has in this country and in this age. Our hope, our only hope, under God, for this great nation, is in the religious intelligence of the people. If we are to fulfil the hopes of our fathers; if we are to answer the expectations of the friends of civil liberty and social progress; if we are to disappoint the predictions of enemies, by perfecting a glorious experiment, for which this vast continent of the new world was hidden by the hand of the Almighty from the notice of nations, for so many long ages, then we must, as a people, so act upon this great law of enlightened liberty, as enunciated in the text, that *we* shall feel, and other nations shall see, that "wisdom and knowledge are the stability of our times, and the strength of our salvation."

But the Anglo-Saxon race have been brought to this continent by the unerring hand of Divine Providence, for a purpose infinitely higher than that of demonstrating, to the satisfaction of the world, the capability of man for self-government. He who governs in the armies of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth, and sees the end from the beginning, has, in this marvellous movement, a purpose to accomplish, connected with His great plan for evangelizing the world. This nation, with its untold destinies, is to form a link in that chain of grace which is yet to belt the earth, and bind its kingdoms into that consecrated brotherhood of nations which shall constitute the kingdom of God, in that coming day of millennial glory, when there shall be but one people and "one God."

The American nation has a mighty mission. The Church of Christ has a message from God to this nation. This message does not relate to their political independence, their commercial greatness, their prowess or their power.

It is a message which declares the fact, that the God of history is the God of to-day, and the God of *Providence* is the God of *Grace*, and “this God is our God,” who has made us, and who has made our nation, for a work connected with His glory in the world’s salvation.

No man, and no body of men, have been called and commissioned to reveal the relation which this people are to sustain to the destiny of the generations that are yet to come—the nature and the measure of the influence which they are to exert in the work of Christianizing this hemisphere, and thence reaching and reforming the peoples of the earth, by casting upon them the light of an ennobling civilization, as it is reflected from the immortal and immutable principles of a pure Christianity. Nor can any man portray the curse which shall crush their proud pretensions to the dust if, false to their faith and recreant to their Redeemer, they heed not the voice of God, and so fail to follow the path to peerless

greatness which His hand has opened before them. Such a responsibility never before rested upon any people ; not because they are “a peculiar people,” for they are not, but because they live in an extraordinary age, and occupy a position before the world without a parallel. In view of this state of things, the question for our time, and for our Church, is : How is this responsibility to be met ? This can only be done by faithfully fulfilling the obligation to secure and promote that “wisdom and knowledge” which “shall be the stability of our times, and the strength of our salvation.” How is this wisdom and this knowledge to be secured for this end ? Not surely by legislative action, since no nation, however politically gifted, can enact themselves wise. Nor is it to be attained by any conventional agreement, for no community, however given to mutual admiration, can resolve themselves into the possession of knowledge. These attributes come of no such processes on the part of men, in their maturity.

The action to this end lies further back than this, much nearer the beginnings of life.

The Creator has ordained the season of childhood and youth as the period of promise, for furnishing the mind with knowledge, and storing the soul with wisdom. When this period is passed, the opportunity has gone forever, beyond recall. God does not change his eternal ordinances to accommodate the depraved caprice or the sinful apathy of his creatures. In this tender and impressible substratum of society, of which so many are unmindful (as if the instruction of children were only an affair of children, and therefore quite beneath their manly regard); here, I say, in the day-spring of young life, in the blooming period of human existence, is this great work to be done; and such is the law of nature, that if it be not done here, it will not be done anywhere.

But, are we to rely upon our "common schools," our academies and colleges, to secure that "wisdom and knowledge" which shall

be the abiding heritage of the people? I answer, No! since it is manifestly the plan and the policy of our systems of popular education to impart to the young mind *knowledge*, separate from *wisdom*. However valuable knowledge may be, as such, however potent its agency, it is not that which does or can constitute "the stability of our times," and stand forth "the strength of our salvation." To confound knowledge with wisdom, and to regard them as convertible terms, is not only to mistake the meaning of words, but it is to commit a blunder pregnant with evil. God has never promised to the possession of mere *knowledge* that great blessing which He has made the consequent of wisdom, as an element of true progress.

"God never meant that man should scale the heavens
By strides of human wisdom. In his works,
Though wond'rous, He commands us in his Word
To seek HIM rather, where his mercy shines.
The mind, indeed, enlightened from above,
Views Him in all; ascribes to the grand cause
The grand effect; acknowledges with joy
His manner, and with rapture tastes his style

But never yet did philosophic tube,
That brings the planets home into the eye
Of observation, and discovers, else
Not visible, his family of worlds,
Discover Him that rules them ; such a veil
Hangs over mortal eyes, blind from the birth,
And dark in things divine. Full often, too,
Our wayward intellect, the more we learn
Of nature, overlooks her author more ;
From instrumental causes proud to draw
Conclusions retrograde, and mad mistake.
But if his Word once teach us, shoot a ray
Through all the heart's dark chambers, and reveal
Truths undiscerned but by that holy light,
Then all is plain. Philosophy, baptiz'd
In the pure fountain of eternal love,
Has eyes, indeed ; and, viewing all she sees
As meant to indicate a God to man,
Gives HIM his praise, and forfeits not her own."

Knowledge is intelligence, information, learning, and relates to *evil* as well as *good*, and may, therefore, become, as it often does become, a terrible engine of iniquity. To train the early intellect of a depraved being, without cultivating the young heart, and disciplining the infant conscience, is only to make the *man* mighty for mischief.

Wisdom, on the other hand, is a revelation of the mind of God to the mind of man ; set-

ting forth the principles of *divine truth* as that great rule of life which is to regulate whatever relates to our duty to God, to the world, and to ourselves. It is that form of knowledge which embraces the true philosophy of life—teaching men how to live and what to live for. It distinctly unfolds to human view the elements of human destiny. While it reveals the relation of antecedents to consequents, it exhibits the great *rule of right*, in all its length and breadth. It embraces the culture of the conscience, that moral sense which the Creator gave to man, whereby he might discern the moral quality of actions, and know right from wrong. It informs the affections, and makes love intelligent, leads it to the pure and weds it to the divine. It introduces man to his Maker and to himself. It brings him into the path of holiness, and teaches him how to walk in it. It makes known to him the true powers of his being, and that mode of their development whereby they may most successfully answer the end

for which they were bestowed, and most fully honor the God who gave them. It enables a man to make the most of his time, and his talents, in the activities of life. In a single word—wisdom is RELIGION—the science of salvation. No immortal being can be said to be truly taught, who has not a knowledge of revealed truth. This truth is learned only in the school of Christ. No man has attained unto wisdom who has not been, and who is not still, a disciple at the feet of the great Master. “This wisdom cometh down from above,” and is the learning of Heaven, and fits the soul for the realities of two worlds: the duties of this, and the destinies of the next. This wisdom is not so much a controlling property of the mind as it is the grand prerogative of the soul. It is this wisdom, in connection with knowledge, which can alone constitute “the stability of our times and the strength of our salvation.”

Just in proportion as this wisdom predominates, in the education of a people, will the institutions of that people partake of that

measure of permanency which betokens the presence of a divine guardianship; and just in that degree, will these institutions abide for a blessing. This is a necessary consequence, since this wisdom is but a reflection of an infinite attribute in the character of Him who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

Wherever God's wisdom reigns supreme, there is not only perfection, but that degree of stability which admits of no change. "The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work." There are no revolutions in that government which guides the stars. There are no rebellions among suns, and celestial systems, for the reason that their first government was founded in a wisdom which is divine, and therefore, too perfect to admit of either failure or improvement. Perpetual order and unbroken harmony are the fruits of divine wisdom.

In proportion as the wisdom of God is

wedded to the knowledge of a people, in the system of their education, in that measure will be "the stability of the times" in which they may have a name and a place. Where, I again ask, is *such* wisdom to be found? Will you look for it in the schools of the State? Is this divine science taught in our popular institutions of learning? No! It is sedulously avoided. The world is more than careful to shut out the gospel from its nurseries of learning, as if human knowledge might, in some way, be contaminated by the touch of divine wisdom. In this regard, our public schools are conducted on a plan which makes them contributors to the natural skepticism of the human heart. The popular purpose seems to be to cultivate the intellect to the utmost, furnishing it with a fearful power, without the controlling, elevating, and conserving influences which come of the culture of holiness of heart. What is to be the result of such a process, perseveringly pursued? What but this? The training of

a race of civil, social, and political suicides. That nation makes a terrific experiment, which arms its rising generation with the two-edged weapon of a godless education: a power potent only for destruction.

Conservative men, *patriotic men*, CHRISTIAN MEN, are beginning to look with alarm upon the tendency of the present popular educational systems in this country. The fact that all decidedly religious truths, all distinctive teachings of the gospel, are positively ignored in our public schools; and the fact that, in some parts of the country, God's Holy Word itself is not allowed a place in these institutions for training the future rulers of the land, are sufficiently expressive to be alarming to every friend of his country and his kind. They that "sow the wind" must not be surprised if they are called to "reap the whirlwind." There is a prevailing disposition abroad to deify the human intellect, to bow down the soul at the shrine of its own *Reason*, as to that Divinity which has a right to the

homage of the heart, and is, therefore, all the God which humanity needs for its guide through earth to heaven.

But where lies the remedy for all this mischief? What power can prove itself more than a match for this pervading and prevailing spirit of infidelity, which, if unchecked, will surely work a woful revolution in all that constitutes the present glory and future promise of our land? I answer: that school which instructs the soul in the wisdom of God; which purifies the heart, while it enlightens the mind. And where is this school to be found? In the Church of Christ. Here the Great Teacher has made every needful provision for securing that wisdom which the soul requires for every condition of this lower life.

The Christian Church is, and is to be, the great training school for earth and Heaven. God, who knew what was in man, who knew the full effect of sin upon the heart and habit of the race; what it would do to the mind,

and how it would affect the life of the fallen, early made provision in His Church for counteracting its fatal influences. As soon as He made a covenant with Abraham, He placed him, and all his spiritual posterity, under a solemn obligation to take the infant, before the world had breathed its pestilential breath of sin upon its heart, and bind that young immortal to the bosom of its Maker, in the bonds of holy faith; and, from that hour forth, that child was to be a pupil in the school of God, a student of divine wisdom. This was the remedy which Jehovah Himself devised for the cure of an evil which is the same now that it ever has been. The Almighty foresaw that however much "knowledge" might abound, the world, if left to itself, would never, of its own motion, be instructed in the great principles of that saving science which educates the whole man, and thereby protects him from all evil and fits him for all good. Thus we see the great interest which the Creator has ever manifested in little chil-

dren. Think of the gracious condescension, on the part of the infinite Jehovah, to be a party to a covenant, on the one side, with a little unconscious infant, of only eight days old, on the other side! Think of the infinite honor conferred upon our poor humanity in this act of divine mercy! From that time forth children, little children, had a large place in the bosom of their Father in Heaven, and they have never lost it, and they never will, for neither the fault of man nor the malice of devils can ever rob them of it.

When, in the fulness of time, God was to become incarnate; when, in order to perfect the plan of salvation, it was necessary for Him to step from His throne to His footstool, how did He do it? Did He bow the heavens and come down? Did He come upon the wings of the wind? Did He appear, as on Mount Sinai, amid thunderings which would strike dismay to the hearts of the people—saints and sinners alike? Did He robe Himself in a mature humanity, as He might have done? Did

he make the earth tremble to its very centre, when he placed his foot upon its surface? No. He chose to humble himself—to be born of a Virgin. He chose the manger of a country inn for his birthplace. As a little child, He, too, was circumcised, and placed with other little children in the Church, by becoming a party to the covenant of grace. He, with them, was presented in the temple by His virgin mother. His infancy was, moreover, made memorable by the martyrdom of all the little children in and about Bethlehem. God placed an honor upon the infancy of human life when He placed this company of “innocents” in the vanguard of that noble army of martyrs who were to stand before His throne, clothed in white robes, with palms in their hands and crowns on their heads, “ascribing glory, and honor, and power, and dominion unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever.”

Then, when He was twelve years old, He visited His own temple, and by that act of his

beautiful boyhood, He consecrated the season of youth to the active service of religion. His parents carried Him to the temple. This was a religious duty on their part. When they returned home, He, of His own will, remained in the temple. This was a religious duty on His part; thereby illustrating the great practical principle which was ever to obtain in His kingdom, that parents were to take their children to the temple, and present them to the Lord, in their early infancy, and were from that time forward to train them to the duties of religion, and for this end were to walk with them to the house of God, so that in youth the fruits of this culture should be seen in the voluntary acts of the baptized child, when, like "the child Jesus," of twelve years, he should of his own accord remain in the temple, to honor God, whither his pious parents had brought him, independently of his own will.

Thus did the Saviour consecrate to the life of holiness, by His own example, that most interesting yet most critical period of child-

hood, when the mind has so far matured as to acquire the power of intelligent choice, thereby creating a moral responsibility for its acts.

Nor are we surprised to see Him, after He entered upon His ministry, stretching forth His hands to receive "little children," that He might lay them upon His bosom, and pronounce upon them the blessing of His love; while He rebuked those who, in their mistaken zeal, would have kept them from Him, assuring them, and assuring us, that however these young immortals may be neglected by us, who ought to love them, and labor for their eternal welfare, "their angels do always behold the face of our Father in Heaven."

To the Church God has committed this charge. With it he has connected a duty and a responsibility from which no consideration can excuse us. The Church has, from the beginning, received these little children, and has recognized the obligation to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." When she applies to them the seal of the cove-

nant, in the waters of baptism, she does not give them back into the hands of their parents until she has solemnly enjoined upon those who present them, "that these children be virtuously brought up, to lead a godly and a Christian life." Nor is this all. When the Saviour tested the love of St. Peter, He commanded him to "feed His lambs," as an evidence of his affection for, and his allegiance to the great Bishop and Shepherd of souls. The care of little children, in the matter of their religious training, was henceforth to be the care of his apostleship. From that hour forth the duty of training the young in the learning of that wisdom which leads to life, was to be a paramount duty of the Christian ministry. Every priest was to be a *pastor* as well as a *preacher*. The lambs of the flock were to be his special charge—as they are, ever have been, and ever are to be, that of the great Shepherd. This duty the minister cannot wholly delegate to another. He may have, as in the necessity of the case he must

have, assistance, but with this commission from Christ, with an abiding injunction from Him : "Feed my lambs," he cannot neglect them but at *his* peril and *theirs*. The duty of the catechetical instruction of children is, to a minister whose heart is in his work, not only among the most profitable but among the most pleasurable labors of his holy calling.

The institution of the Sunday School is one of the noblest enterprises of modern times, as an auxiliary, which the minister may employ in the work of feeding the lambs with food convenient for them, whereby they may attain that divine stature and ghostly strength which shall fit them for the duties of earth, and for the glories of Heaven.

No child liveth to himself, and no child dieth to himself. When we take these little ones by the hand, and seek to turn their tender hearts to the Lord, and to furnish them with the principles of religion, as the divine armor of their life, as well as its supreme rule, then we do, indeed, a great good to that indi-

vidual child, but we do, also, a great good to other children, whom we may never know, but who will be known by this child, whom we have taught, and will, by him, be instructed in the ways of Heavenly wisdom.

Moreover, we confer a blessing upon our common country; upon its institutions, in contributing to their purity and to their perpetuity, by doing something to promote that "knowledge and wisdom" which alone can be "the stability of our times and the strength of our salvation."

In this labor of love we do an essential service to the Church, in whose faith these young soldiers of the cross are to be trained, by instructing them in its distinctive doctrines, in its evangelical faith, its apostolic practice, and its divine authority, and by teaching them to love her ways and to labor for her success. We do a service to the world, which needs just what the Church *has*, by virtue of being "the pillar and ground of the truth;" the great reformatory power of the race, by

whose instrumentality it is to be reclaimed. We honor God, whose servants *we* are, and whose children *they* are, when we seek to furnish their opening minds with the light of His truth, and sow in their tender hearts the seeds of holiness, and to mould their pliant characters after the divine pattern of their immaculate Saviour. Who is to do all this? Who will be visited with a curse if it be neglected, to the loss of a single soul, to the overthrow of our national heritage, to the hindrance of the kingdom of Christ, and to the dishonor of God? I answer: every one of us here present. No man and no woman are exempt from the responsibility, and no person may ignore the duty.

This divine tuition must begin at life's beginning. The first lessons in the science of salvation must be imparted in the family, that first "free school" of God, where a mother's power and a mother's love show that her commission, as a *teacher*, comes from Heaven; a teacher that can never be

superseded with safety by any instructor of human appointment. It is around the hearthstone of home that the dawning mind of the young immortal is to discover the first glimpses of that beauty of holiness, which is to fit him for usefulness here, and for happiness hereafter. Let every parent behold, in the little child that God has given him, an obligation with which no other in this world can be compared; demanding a duty, which involves a destiny as enduring as eternity. That child is to be trained for Heaven. As soon as it is born, its face is to be turned toward Paradise; its little feet are to be placed in the narrow path of life; its tiny hands are to be taught to do the works of righteousness, and its gentle heart to throb in harmony with the pure and undefiled. Consecrated to God, it is to be brought up in His Church; carried in infancy, as Jesus was, in His mother's arms, to the temple; led thither as the Saviour was by His parents, during the period of childhood. The parent can only do

his whole duty to his child by coöperating with the minister in all those untiring labors of love which are required to keep the lambs in the fold, and to fit them for the employments and the enjoyments of Heaven.

But it becomes us to remember that this responsibility rests also upon those who do not sustain the relation of parents. These little ones are God's children: your brothers and sisters. Your father is their father. "Ye are all one man's sons;" born of one mother, going to one country, to stand before one and the same impartial judge, who "is no respecter of persons." Somebody must instruct them in the principles of that wisdom which is "the stability of our times and the strength of our salvation." There are many who seem to think that a Sunday School is a matter which chiefly concerns a few men and women, whose zeal finds a very proper expression in the work of teaching children to "fear God and keep His commandments."

You are, every one of you, debtors to the

Church, to your country, to the world; to generations that are to come after you. This debt you can pay in no other way than by doing what you can in imparting true wisdom to these children, who are so soon to be the *men* of the land, and the inhabitants of eternity.

It may not be, as it certainly is not, the duty of every person to engage directly in the office of teaching; yet it is the duty of all persons, without exception, to aid this work by their countenance and by their contributions; by their presence and their prayers; by words of cheer to those who devote their time and talents to this noblest of labors; by aiding this Society, whose anniversary we celebrate to-night, in the circulation of a pure Christian literature.*

If any be ever tempted to stand aloof from this labor, as something beneath their regard, let them ponder for a moment the positions which these children are to occupy in the world and in the Church, fifty years hence.

* Note A : Appendix.

When you look upon a company of these little ones, on their way to the Lord's house, on the Lord's Day, without, it may be, any agency of yours, you may some time be inclined to pause for a moment, and ask: Who is that little boy, whom the hand of a stranger has clad in the garments of charity? Suppose an angel were to be sent from Heaven, to whisper in your ear an answer to the question, he might reply: That is the Chief Justice of the State. And who is that bright-eyed boy, in tattered dress, whom no kind friend has yet clothed in neat attire? That is the Governor of the Commonwealth. And who are this group of smiling little ones, who know neither letters nor cares? They are the men who are to make your laws. And who, pray, is that boy whose noble mien, and large head, and intelligent countenance, bespeak so much of high promise? I hardly dare tell you. He will be a *saint* or a *devil*; and which of the two, it may be for you to say. Somebody must take him by the hand and love him,

and teach him to love, before hate gets the mastery of his heart, and he is ruined forever. Can you listlessly look on, and see such a being go down to perdition, and, by the power of his splendid abilities, drag down thousands after him? But who is that little lad, with a piercing eye and determined look? He, answers the angel, is the embodiment of radicalism; infidel in religion, agrarian in politics, he has in him all the elements of a master-spirit of rebellion. But you may lead the young giant, if you will, with the silken thread of love, to the altar of God, in this pliant period of his young life, and bind him to that altar forever. Will you do it, for his sake, for your country's sake? or, are you above such *charity*—such *patriotism*? Who is that boy, almost too small to be seen in the street, and quite too poor to be noticed by his associates? That is the man who is to be the associate of your son, and who may ruin that son forever. Yet you may now save both; but you can do this only by imparting to

them that wisdom which comes from Heaven, and which you have learned.

As, therefore, you love your child, as you love your country, as you love your race, as you love the Church, as you love your God, and would honor Him, stand no longer above a duty which the Saviour did not regard as beneath Himself.

But these children are to be something more than good citizens or bad citizens; something more than governors, and judges, and legislators. They have a home above the skies. Immortality is the prerogative of the humblest of them. Heaven or hell is to be their eternal abode. They are to wear a crown, or wear a chain forever. They are to dwell with the lost, or to be "kings and priests to God."

To see and rightly estimate our relations to these children of the Church, and of the world, we must look upon them in that sunlight which shines down from the throne of God upon them and upon us; that light in

which we and they shall appear when we stand together before the judgment seat of Christ. How shall we fully meet the responsibility of such a relation, and faithfully do the duties belonging to it?

The chief instrumentality for accomplishing all this is the SUNDAY SCHOOL. This institution, which in this age has become an absolute necessity, and which, when rightly conducted, under the immediate direction and control of the ministry (whom God holds responsible for the instruction of the lambs of the flock), will avail, by the blessing of Heaven, to check the tide of infidelity which is now rising in the land, and remedy, in a measure, the mischief of our popular systems of a godless education; while it becomes an efficient agency in training the young in the ways of that divine wisdom whereby they may "grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth," until they reach the full stature of men, in Christ Jesus.

The interests of the Sunday School pertain

to the child, the Church, and the world. Its claims come to us with all the force of this threefold relationship, combining in this one our duty to each. The expediency of Sunday School instruction is no longer an open question. The point which chiefly challenges our attention is how this agency may be made to answer most effectively the great purpose for which it is employed? To answer this question in detail, would require more time than I can now command; I shall, therefore, attempt only an outline of the more prominent points in such a course.

In the first place, these nurseries of holy learning should not be looked upon as merely "SUNDAY SCHOOLS," i. e., as the name imports, schools taught on *Sunday*. They should be regarded as the Church's TRAINING SCHOOLS, where her young soldiers are placed to fit them for the contests of earth and for the glories of Heaven. We should never forget that these young immortals are committed to our charge, not simply to be instructed in the

rudiments of useful knowledge, and in the first principles of good morals, but to be taught to know and believe all that a full grown Christian ought to “know and believe to his soul’s health” and salvation. Where this institution is employed only as a means to draw in children by the attractions of a species of moral entertainment, and for imparting the merest morals of religion, such as a Deist might consent to, it may indeed be a *Sunday School*, but it is not a school of CHRIST. To be worthy the Christian’s confidence and support, it should be a school whose exercises are not limited to the recitation of lessons committed to memory, but a place where the entire Christian character is to be developed and matured; where *mind*, *heart*, and *habit* of life, are all to be the subjects of the teacher’s patient and devout labors. In all that pertains to the completeness of the Christian the child is to be trained, and with this end in view, should he be sent by his parent and be received by his teacher.

Hence, the Sunday School should never be regarded, in any degree or in any sense, as an institution separate and apart from the Church. It is not to be esteemed as an auxiliary to the Church, as some are in the habit of doing, since it is a part of the Church itself, and as such, is to be employed. For who are these pupils that come hither for instruction? They are the members of the covenant; they are the children of Jesus, "inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven;" as such they are to be treated and trained. For this reason, the minister of Christ must be the master of the fold. These lambs have been intrusted to his charge by the great Shepherd, and they have been committed to the care of no other. He, and he alone, has promised to feed them. While, indeed, the pastor may share the labor of this duty with another, he cannot share the responsibility with another.

Some ministers are in the habit of committing the entire charge and supervision of the Sunday School to laymen. Such a practice is

wrong in itself, and mischievous in its results, and tends to defeat one of the most profitable purposes of this organization. It matters not how well disposed, or how well qualified lay teachers may be, on the *commissioned ambassador of CHRIST* rests the responsibility of the instruction of the children of the Church. His duties upon the Lord's Day may forbid his taking an active part in the immediate instruction of the school, but they should never be allowed to interfere with his supervision of it, with his visits to it, and the influence of his active interest in it.

To this end, the power of the appointment of teachers should be retained and exercised by the Rector, and holding their office at his pleasure, they should be regarded, not as an independent association of instructors, but as his assistants. The failure of Sunday Schools, in many instances, to fulfil the expectations of ministers and people, is to be directly traced to the lack of interest in its labors, on the part of the minister, who rarely visits the

school, and who has unwarrantably intrusted the whole matter to a body of teachers, who make their rules, elect their associates, and conduct their affairs entirely independently of their pastor. Many ministers excuse themselves from engaging in any coöperation in this labor of love, in consequence of the duties of the Lord's Day. A visit of fifteen or twenty minutes to the Sunday School, with a few words of cheer to the teachers, and as many of pleasant instruction to the children, would serve to refresh, rather than fatigue, the mind of the man of God who loves his Master and his Master's work.

But with every preliminary rightly settled in regard to the organization and supervision of the school, how shall it be taught that it may meet the wants of the children, the need of the Church, and the exigencies of the times? When a child is born into this world its parents are intrusted with a precious charge, to which they are bound by the ties of a natural love, and the obligations of a

natural law. They treat that child neither as an animal nor a spirit, but as a being possessed of body, mind, and soul; an intelligent, immortal creature, inhabiting a mortal body. Its treatment and development are in accordance with these admitted facts, and its coming destiny, as a creature of extraordinary endowments and capabilities. It is not nurtured as if it had only a body, or as if its mind were a matter of such moment as to warrant in its culture the entire neglect of its physical powers, or as if its being were wonderful but not immortal, and therefore no subject for moral instruction. That parent would be regarded as culpable, if not insane, who should educate any single set of powers in his child to the neglect of all others.

The children who are entrusted to our care in the Sunday School are the "members of Christ, children of God, inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven." They have been made a part of God's family on earth. Like the children of earth, they are here for their

education. They have been placed in the Church for the purpose of being trained for Heaven. As *such* they are to be educated. For this purpose they are entrusted to our care and have been placed in the Sunday School; and as we should be guilty of the grossest wrong, if we were to educate but one set of faculties in our children, or if we were to give exclusive attention to the body to the neglect of the mind, or were to be regardless of physical culture in the development of the mental powers, or if we were to be so engrossed with either or both, as to pay no attention to morals; so should we be guilty of a greater sin, if we were to pursue a like course, in training these children, “the members of Christ,” in the learning of their new estate. No single branch of knowledge should be pursued to the neglect of others. No one class of virtues or graces should be inculcated at the expense of others.

The Sunday School should be conducted on the principle, that these children of God are

to be fitted for the service of God; and that it is not the office of this agency to impart instruction in a single branch of Biblical knowledge, but to develop the Christian in heart, habit, and life.

The Bible is to be the great text-book; the Prayer Book its indispensable commentary. The historical truths of the Bible are to be taught as they are recorded in Scripture. The doctrines of the Bible are to be inculcated, as they have been interpreted in the Prayer Book.

All this is to be done in a manner suited to the capacity of the child, giving the "sincere milk of the word" to the infant; reserving the stronger meat for those of fuller age.

"CHRIST CRUCIFIED" is to be in the Sunday School what it is in the gospel, the great central truth, around which all others revolve. The plan of salvation is to be mapped out in lines so clear, and in terms so simple, that the Bible scholar will become as familiar with its great points, and the historical facts

in connection with them, as he is with any branch of worldly knowledge. In order to do this, these young learners must be thoroughly instructed in the principles which lie at the foundation of the Christian religion, as they are contained in that unrivalled epitome of divinity, the CHURCH CATECHISM.

The Bible, as the rule of faith, and the law of life, in all its parts of history, prophecy, and poetry; in all its parts of evangelical revelation, gospel and epistles, is never for an instant to yield the supremacy of its place to any other mode or matter of instruction.

The ignorance of the Bible, on the part of adult Christians, is a reproach to the Church in this nineteenth century. That evil can best be remedied in the thorough instruction of the Sunday School.

While these children are thus instructed in the truth that God wrote the Bible, and they are bound to learn it and love it, for His sake and for their own, they are also to be taught that in like manner He has instituted a

Church and ordained a Ministry; that this Church is God's house and their home; as much *His* and *theirs* as the BIBLE. As such, they are to be instructed in its authority, polity, and worship; that they may rightly receive it, duly employ it, and intelligently defend it.

Hence, every thing in the Sunday School should harmonize with the Church's usages, illustrating and confirming them, never even in appearance conflicting with them, so that the teachings of the one shall but confirm the principles and practices of the other. The children should be so instructed as that they shall never so much as imagine, for a moment, that when they are in the Sunday School they are in any sense out of the Church, or that their exercises are in any way disconnected with the Church. They should never be left to infer this by the apparent want of interest in the welfare of the school on the part of the minister, as manifested by his habitual absence. For this reason, also, the

devotional services of the school should be conducted with a liturgy, that there be no discrepancy between the worship of the sanctuary and that of the school; that the love of their hearts may be early and strongly wedded to her ways of spiritual pleasantness.

But, as I have already remarked, this institution is a training school, where the young soldiers of Jesus are to be fitted for the campaign of a godly life. Their instruction is not, therefore, to be limited to the questions and answers of a text-book. Its tuition is to extend to everything which the child is capable of learning, by which its Christian character may be rightly nurtured and duly developed. The baptized child was made "a soldier" in his baptism, by which he was consecrated to his Redeemer, and to a life of laborious and valorous service. His spiritual education is to be that which will befit such a condition. He is a CADET, and the Sunday School is to be the "academy" where he is to learn how to wield the weapons of his holy

warfare in the service of the Great Captain of his salvation; fighting for the cause of Christ and his kingdom, "against the world, the flesh, and the devil." In all that pertains to the science of a divine conflict, its discipline, labor, self-denial, endurance, and devotion, he is, as far as practicable, to be taught habits of thought and action, the spirit of loyalty and love; the cultivation of all that constitutes "the mind of Christ," as seen in His immaculate character, and as illustrated in the lives of His most faithful followers, in the different ages of the Church; obedience to the two great commandments of love to God and man, and the development and direction of the missionary spirit, and the duties of its practical manifestation. These are to constitute the careful training of the child in the Sunday School, which should ever be a nursery of love, where the infantile disciples are taught to love their God with all their heart. Love for the lost, and the work of their salvation, should be as carefully inculcated in these

divisions of the great family of Heaven, as affection for relatives is inculcated among the families of earth.

In other words, the Sunday School should be a working church in miniature—an organized army, thoroughly disciplined in all they are to do when they go forth in the world to join in the activities of the battle-strife of a holy life. If ours is, and is to be, a *missionary Church*, as every Church of Christ should be; if we intend to make mighty conquests in the dominions of darkness, we must bring out the utmost strength of our communion, in the form of faith and works. But this can be done effectually only by an early and wise development and culture of the missionary spirit.* Children must be interested, and, in order to this, they must be informed. Every school should, therefore, of itself, be a missionary society, where interesting intelligence from every quarter of the world is regularly communicated, and in a form which will at-

* Note B: Appendix.

tract their attention and touch their hearts. But *doing* should be here linked with *believing*. Children should early understand that faith, without works, is of no value in the sight of God. Hence, the duty of regularly giving something to the cause of Christ should become a habit, firmly fixed in the strength of a principle. To this end they should be trained to the practice of self-denial, to the duty of prayer, and to the habit of a devout and systematic activity, in all that pertains to the increase of true religion in their own hearts, and to the increase of Christ's kingdom through the world.

By thus making the Sunday School a proper training school, these young immortals will become, in very deed, what they were made in their baptism, "soldiers and servants of Christ," clad in the panoply of the gospel, and may go forth to do great and good service for Christ and His Church; secure against the insidious assaults of the devil; strong enough to meet and master the cham-

pions of deadly error ; mighty enough to turn back the terrific tide of infidelity which is rushing through the land ; well furnished with arguments in defence of God's truth ; intelligent and attached members of the Episcopal Church ; consistent and successful advocates of its apostolic claims, who will maintain, with a godly consistency, her evangelical doctrines, apostolic order, and distinctive usages ; and will become " bright and shining lights in the world," an honor to religion, and a blessing to their race.

But the benefits of Sunday Schools are by no means limited to the children who are taught in them. When rightly conducted, they contribute quite as much to the improvement of the teachers as the taught. The teacher who knows his office, feels his responsibility, and does his duty, must be a successful learner in the school of Christ ; he will be a diligent student of the Bible ; he will cultivate in his own heart the graces which he desires to foster in the heart of the child ; and he will

practise in his life those traits of Christian conduct which he seeks to develope in the life of his pupil. He thus becomes himself, while seeking to benefit others, a growing Christian and a zealous missionary. No true teacher, in love with his work, and loyal to his divine Master, will be content with the mere routine labors of an hour, once a week. His interest in his class, his desire to make the school an efficient missionary organization—by systematic contributions, by the work of gathering in the poor, by opening new schools in destitute districts, which may become the nucleus of new churches ; in these, and in other ways, he will realize the truth of the promise that “he that watereth shall be watered also himself.”

This instrumentality, in respect to which so much has been said, and in regard to which so much has already been done, is, after all, but in the dawn of its development. No man living has ever yet conceived of the marvellous mightiness of its power for good.

When the Church fully awakes to a sense of her duty in this regard, and arises to do it, in faith and with all her heart, then will God send down such a blessing upon it, that this giant in the Church will go forth in his might to the accomplishment of that work which is its true mission, and with a success that shall surprise the people of God and confound the emissaries of the devil.

But how shall all this be brought about? I answer, Only by the hearty coöperation of all who profess and call themselves Christians.

Parents must learn their duty, and practise it. They must give, cordially, their countenance to it, by coöperating, in every way, for the promotion of its full success.

Those whom God has qualified to instruct others, must take their talent from the napkin and lay it upon God's altar, and be ready to do what their hands find to do in this great field, however humble the labor, and thus lend their learning and their life to this best of causes. You, who are neither parents nor

teachers, must aid the work, by aiding this Society in its efforts to send their publications through the length and breadth of the land—to destitute neighborhoods, where the Church is not yet established.* The duty is plain. The obligation rests upon all the members of the Church to further this enterprise in some form, by their prayers, or their presence, or their charities, or by their labors and influence, or by them all, as a willing sacrifice, if sacrifice it can be called.

The condition of the young is perilous. The command is explicit. The way is plain. The obligation imperious. The promise glorious. The time short. The reward eternal.

Let us, as Christians and Churchmen, awake to a right sense of our true position in this respect, and consecrate our souls anew to this work, and may God give us His grace so to do it that when our labors are ended, and Christ shall come to meet us, we may say to Him : “ Behold, I and the children whom thou

*Note C : Appendix.

hast given me ;” and He shall say to us :
“ Well done, thou good and faithful servant ;
thou hast been faithful over a few things, I
will make thee ruler over many things ; enter
thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

* Matt., xxv. : 21.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.

A ready way to reach and relieve the destitute at a distance, is by furnishing this society with funds, wherewith to send their publications into every neighborhood in the country, thus affording facilities to Churchmen in districts where there are no regular services of the Church, to enable them to organize and instruct schools, by which they may not only do a great immediate good to the young, but may, by their labors, lay the foundation of future parishes. Our people are slow to enter upon this broad and promising field of missionary labor, which other bodies of Christians so zealously improve, in the various forms of colportage which they so vigorously prosecute and liberally sustain. There are thousands of persons in our communion who could annually give, each, a Sunday School Library or a set of Question Books to some Sunday School at the West. Let this be done, and a new impulse would be given to the Sunday School cause, at home and abroad. Let every Missionary Bishop be liberally supplied with as many Sunday School books as he can find a profitable use for in his missionary jurisdiction, and we may confidently look for a rich harvest from these seeds sown in faith.

NOTE B.

Too little is done in our Sunday Schools, in the work of cultivating a missionary spirit. There are, we are

glad to know, a few exceptions to this remark, in some of our parishes, where large contributions are made every year for the support of missions, both in our own country and in foreign lands. The habit of Christian charity, and the love of it, is an important element in the character of a Christian, and should be early and rightly developed. If every Sunday School in the country should become an organized missionary society, and every class an integral part of such an organization, we should not only receive a very considerable increase of funds for this glorious cause from their combined contributions, but, what is of more importance, we should thereby train these children in the way of their duty, as good soldiers and servants, so that when they come to be men and women they may carry with them an influence, in their various positions in life, which shall be felt when the pennies of the boy become the dollars of the man. We cannot easily overestimate the importance of the early development and cultivation of the missionary spirit in the minds and hearts of the young.

NOTE C.

The claims of this society should be brought frequently to the notice of our Sunday Schools. The teachers and scholars should be familiar with its work and its wants. The mere fact that this institution publishes books of instruction, and furnishes volumes for the library, is not sufficient of itself to interest them in the great enterprise which it is designed to carry out. Their attention should be called to this matter by their pastor. Facts in relation to its success, the field which it is designed to occupy, the mode of its operations, the results thus far of its labors, and the way in which children may successfully coöperate in furthering this noble undertaking,

are subjects which it is feared are not often presented to the scholars and their teachers. We cannot hope to excite an interest in this society, and secure liberal contributions for its support, unless we take particular pains to keep our schools familiar with the facts pertaining to its progress.

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